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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 1225 (1999) of 28 January 1999, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for a new period terminating on 31 July 1999, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of UNOMIG in the event of any changes in the mandate or in the presence of the peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Council also requested that I continue to keep it regularly informed and that I report on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, three months after the date of the adoption of the resolution. This report is submitted in pursuance of that request and provides an update on the situation as at mid-April 1999.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

2. During the reporting period my Special Representative, Liviu Bota, together with representatives of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, and of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General (France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America), made a concerted effort to achieve an agreement on the return of refugees to the Gali district in its old boundaries and on measures for the economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia, Georgia.

3. At a meeting at Sukhumi on 12 January 1999, my Special Representative and the Abkhaz leader, Vladislav Ardzinba, discussed the terms of the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali district. As my Special Representative understood, they agreed orally on three contentious issues dividing the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, namely, the extent of participation by returnees in the local law enforcement organs of the Gali district; the role and deployment of the CIS peacekeeping force; and measures for the normalization of the customs and border regime at the Psou River, including the question of transportation. They further agreed that Mr. Ardzinba would make a formal statement outlining those agreements to the Ambassadors of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General, who would travel to Sukhumi for this purpose. However, during a meeting at Sukhumi on 23 January 1999 with my Special

Representative and representatives of the group of Friends, Mr. Ardzinba presented proposals different from those that were understood to have been agreed on with my Special Representative earlier in the month. In a joint statement issued on 27 January 1999, the Friends of the Secretary-General expressed disappointment that an opportunity to take the first important step forward in the negotiation process had been lost.

4. The seventh session of the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, chaired by my Special Representative, was held at Tbilisi on 11 February 1999. The Georgian delegation was led by State Minister Vazha Lordkipanidze, and the Abkhaz delegation by the de facto Prime Minister, Sergei Bagapsh. Representatives of the Russian Federation as facilitator, led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Leonid Drachevskii, and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), as well as the members of the group of the Friends of the Secretary-General, also participated.

5. The agenda of the Coordinating Council session included issues relating to the lasting non-resumption of hostilities and security problems, refugees and internally displaced persons, and economic and social problems. After its deliberations, the Council decided that a meeting of representatives of the two sides, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force would convene within two weeks, under the chairmanship of the Chief Military Observer of UNOMIG, to develop a mechanism for the Joint Investigation Group; that the two sides, jointly with UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force, would elaborate and implement concrete measures for the non-resumption of hostilities, prevention of confrontation and separation of forces; that representatives of the force structures of the two sides would examine any information the two sides might have that could lead to a renewal of hostilities; that bilateral negotiations on a mechanism for the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali district in its old boundaries should continue; and that the respective commissions of the two sides would report to the Council at its next session concerning missing-in-action cases from 1992-1993 conflict. In addition, the Council session provided an opportunity for direct contacts and consultations between representatives of the two sides.

6. As part of confidence-building measures between the two sides, promoted by my Special Representative, a Georgian television crew travelled to Sukhumi and interviewed Mr. Ardzinba. The 50-minute interview was broadcast unedited on Georgian state television on 22 February. A similar interview with President Shevardnadze by Abkhaz journalists, to be shown on Abkhaz television, is being planned. Specific projects involving economic cooperation between the two sides also continued to develop, facilitated, in part, by the Executive Secretary of the Bilateral Joint Coordination Commission for Practical Questions, Zurab Lakerbaia.

7. Following the Coordinating Council's session, active mediation efforts on the return of refugees to the Gali district continued, involving, in addition to my Special Representative, high-ranking officials of the two sides and envoys of the Russian Federation. As a result of those activities, agreement in principle was reached on formulations for two of the three issues (see para. 3 above) that had continued to divide the two sides. The question of the role and deployment of the CIS peacekeeping force remains unresolved.

8. On 1 March, the Abkhaz side, through a Commission created for this purpose by Mr. Ardzinba, unilaterally began implementation of a refugee return programme to the Gali district, including registration of returnees. Because of its lack of guarantees for the safety and security of the returnees, this unilateral initiative elicited numerous reservations from the international community and from the Georgian side. It is also feared that, because it would be implemented in a security vacuum, the return programme could prove fertile ground for an escalation of tensions, possibly fuelled by disinformation, similar to the events of May 1998.

9. The CIS Council of Heads of State, during its meeting in Moscow on 2 April, adopted a decision on further measures to settle the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia (see S/1999/392). The signatories agreed, inter alia, to try to hold consultations on ways in which other CIS States might participate, together with the Russian Federation, with military contingents or observers, or in some other form, in the CIS peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, Georgia, without changing its strength of 3,000 troops. The Council also decided that, within one month, the sides should finalize and sign the draft agreement on peace and guarantees for the prevention of armed confrontation and the draft protocol on the return of refugees to the Gali district and measures for economic rehabilitation. Furthermore, the CIS Council decided to confirm the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force until 2 April 1999, and to agree in principle with the proposal to extend the length of stay for six months, or until such time as one of the parties would request that it cease operations, to come into effect upon the signing by the sides of the two draft documents mentioned above. However, should the sides fail to reach agreement within the designated period of one month, the Council would reconsider the continued presence of the CIS peacekeeping force in the zone of conflict.

10. On 27 January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommended that Georgia should become the forty-first member of that body. One of the requirements attached to the recommendation was that the Government of Georgia should continue to pursue a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. On 25 March, the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe approved Georgia's membership and an official ceremony is to be held in Strasbourg on 27 April.

III. OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA

11. Since I last reported to the Security Council on 20 January 1999 (see S/1999/60), there have been no changes in the operations of UNOMIG. While ensuring adequate security of the personnel, limited patrolling within the security and restricted weapon zones has continued. Despite the closure of the team bases and the curtailed scope of its operations, UNOMIG has been able to observe and verify satisfactorily the compliance by the sides with the Moscow Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces of 14 May 1994 (see S/1994/583, annex I) and the Gagra Protocol of 25 May 1998 (see S/1998/497, para. 4). In pursuance of decisions taken by the Coordinating Council at its sixth and seventh sessions on the separation of forces along the ceasefire line, UNOMIG has facilitated meetings between local commanders and is monitoring progress on the ground.

12. The establishment of the Joint Investigation Group as a mechanism for investigating violations of the 1994 Moscow Agreement, in pursuance of a decision taken at the fifth session of the Coordinating Council in September 1998, is still under negotiation. UNOMIG legal experts have produced draft guidelines for the functioning of the Group, which were distributed to the sides and to the CIS peacekeeping force. A meeting of representatives of the two sides, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force under the chairmanship of the Chief Military Observer could not be convened as required by the decision of the Coordinating Council at its seventh session, as both sides requested more time to study the UNOMIG proposal. Meanwhile, UNOMIG continues to arrange and monitor, with the participation of representatives of both sides and the CIS peacekeeping force, ad hoc joint investigations of alleged violations of the Moscow Agreement and acts of terrorism. While this approach is possible for incidents that occur along the ceasefire line, the parties, particularly the Abkhaz side, do not permit joint investigations in other areas.

13. The road resurfacing and repair project continues and work on the M-27 trunk road between Ochamchira and the Gali Canal has commenced. Plans are under way to extend this project to the lower Gali area where, as a result of the greater mine threat, UNOMIG ground patrols remain suspended. Priority is being given to the road along the ceasefire line, to allow access for verification and monitoring in comparatively better security conditions. The stretches of the M-27 between the Gali Canal and the Inguri River that were repaired in the last quarter of 1998 have deteriorated because of winter rains and the poor quality of the repair work, and it is likely that additional repair work will be needed in the near future.

14. The deployment of 13 additional ballistic-protected vehicles (RG-32 Scouts) in February 1999 significantly enhanced the operational flexibility of UNOMIG patrols, especially in the lower Gali area. Twelve more of those vehicles have arrived in the Mission area in April, which will further enhance existing capabilities. The Chief Military Observer recommends that, owing to the nature of the mine threat in some areas of the security zone, the old fleet of 13 mine-protected vehicles should remain in operation until replacement vehicles that provide a similar level of protection can be deployed. Provisions have been made in the cost estimates for the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000 to replace the 13 mine-protected vehicles, which have reached the end of their serviceable life.

15. The helicopter assigned to UNOMIG in June 1998 has continued to provide invaluable security back-up and operational support. As noted in my two previous reports (S/1998/1012, para. 27 and S/1999/60, para. 17), the addition of a second helicopter is considered essential for enhancing the operational efficiency and security of UNOMIG. Provisions for the deployment of an additional helicopter to strengthen the air operations of UNOMIG were also made in the cost estimates for the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000.

IV. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA AND THE COLLECTIVE PEACEKEEPING FORCE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

16. The working relationship between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force has remained good and close liaison is being maintained at all levels. The CIS peacekeeping force has provided assistance in mine clearance and special escorts for UNOMIG patrols assigned to survey road infrastructure in the lower Gali region. Regular meetings are held for coordination of operations and sharing of information. UNOMIG relies on the CIS peacekeeping force for its security assistance in emergency situations and will continue to identify areas where procedures can be further streamlined.

17. The CIS peacekeeping force has continued to fulfil its mandate through static checkpoints and very limited mobile patrolling. It has participated increasingly in implementing the separation of forces along the ceasefire line and has taken part actively in the investigation of incidents of violence. During the reporting period, the targeting of the CIS peacekeeping force by armed groups has decreased.

V. SITUATION ON THE GROUND

A. General

18. While the general situation in the conflict zone remains tense and unstable, the situation along the ceasefire line has become relatively calm and incidents involving exchanges of fire have considerably diminished. However, activities by armed groups, particularly in the lower Gali area, have not ceased and the Abkhaz militia continues to be targeted. Criminal activities are on the increase and insecurity still prevails in the area. Violations of the Moscow Agreement of 1994, in the form of denial of access to patrols and deployment of prohibited weapons, continue despite protests by UNOMIG. As the weather improves, more and more displaced persons from the Gali district are returning to visit their houses and to take up temporary residence.

B. Security and restricted weapon zones

19. The Abkhaz unilateral initiative to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali region was a focus of attention during the reporting period (see para. 8 above). It appears that the initiative has met with only a limited response among the displaced population, partly because of the lack of security guarantees and the absence of supporting infrastructure. In my last report (S/1999/60, para. 24), I noted that the potential returnees did not have confidence in the security conditions in the district. This assessment remains essentially unchanged. There has been no significant success in combating criminal acts despite efforts by Abkhaz authorities to redress the situation. A limited but increasing number of people are, however, regularly visiting their houses for short stays.

20. Another development during the reporting period was the lengthy blockade of the M-27 trunk road. On 16 February, a group of around 200 displaced persons established a camp on the Georgian side of the Inguri Bridge and prevented UNOMIG vehicles and personnel from crossing, while allowing other people to do so. The blockade lasted for 21 days, until 8 March 1999, creating serious logistics and operational problems for UNOMIG and adversely affecting its operations.

21. Irregular armed groups have remained active, particularly in the lower Gali area, and have mostly targeted the Abkhaz militia. The mine threat in the lower Gali area has also not receded and UNOMIG ground patrols in that area remain suspended as a result. During the reporting period, 11 Abkhaz militiamen and 7 civilians were killed in incidents in the Gali district. It is assessed that the continuing presence and activities of armed and criminal groups are the main factors contributing to instability and tension in the conflict zone, and there is a need for the authorities to make serious efforts to bring them to an end.

22. The situation along the line of separation of forces has improved substantially. Both sides have exercised greater restraint and there have been considerably fewer exchanges of fire across the ceasefire line. The separation of forces has also continued, although at a slower pace than would have been desirable. Despite an agreement at the 11 February session of the Coordinating Council, the defensive positions of the Georgian Interior Ministry troops in the area of Gan Mukhuri and Orsantia have not been pulled back. The Chief Military Observer considers the complete and simultaneous separation of forces all along the ceasefire line to be crucial for minimizing the risk that incidents might escalate.

23. UNOMIG continues to observe the presence of prohibited weapons in the security zone; however, the quantity and quality of these weapons do not give rise to grave concern. Although UNOMIG reports these observations to the parties and registers protests, the response of the parties remains inadequate.

24. The overall situation in the Zugdidi sector remained calm but unstable; heightened tension was noticeable during the blockade of the M-27 road.

C. Kodori Valley

25. Access to the upper Kodori Valley by road remains impossible because of the destroyed bridge on the road from Sukhumi and the closure of the mountain pass on the route from Zugdidi as a result of the winter weather. No progress has been made on having the authorities repair the bridge so as to enable ground patrols to access the entire valley. The helicopter was therefore used for patrolling in the Georgian-controlled upper part of the valley, while ground patrols were launched into the Abkhaz part. The situation in the area remains calm; however, the Abkhaz side has repeatedly accused the Georgian side of undertaking a military build-up in the Kodori Valley. Recently, the Georgian authorities for the first time refused clearance to a UNOMIG helicopter patrol to the area. This has caused concern and a protest has been lodged. UNOMIG plans to step up the frequency of its helicopter patrols to monitor the

situation more closely and it is expected that its freedom of movement will be respected. The team base at Ajara in the upper Kodori Valley remains closed.

VI. SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

26. The security and safety of UNOMIG personnel continues to receive the highest priority and consideration. There has been no incident directed against UNOMIG personnel during the period under review. However, with the deteriorating economic situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, common criminality is on the rise. Cases of theft of UNOMIG property occurred, mostly in Sukhumi at premises guarded by Abkhaz authorities. This is an alarming trend and UNOMIG is pursuing better security arrangements. The relative calm along the ceasefire line and progress achieved in the separation of forces has reduced the risk that UNOMIG patrols might be caught in a crossfire.

27. The security arrangements outlined in my last report (S/1999/60, para. 30) remain in place at the UNOMIG headquarters and installations. The induction of lightly armed international civilian security officers and additional local watchmen has further augmented the existing internal security arrangements. With the improvement in the environment, the Chief Military Observer has been given discretion to progressively ease some of the less critical security restrictions currently in place.

28. UNOMIG continues to rely on the local administrative and law enforcement structures for the security and safety of its personnel and property. The parties have been keen to fulfil their obligations and have extended the necessary cooperation. Liaison is being maintained with them to further improve their response and to investigate fully incidents involving United Nations personnel and property. However, it remains a matter of serious concern that the investigation by the Abkhaz authorities of the bus incident of 21 September 1998 has still not been concluded.

29. The CIS peacekeeping force is aware of its responsibility for providing assistance for the security and protection of UNOMIG under the Moscow Agreement of 1994 and efforts to further streamline the modalities of this assistance will continue.

VII. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

30. The humanitarian situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, remains dire. Humanitarian assistance to many of the most vulnerable civilians continues through the ongoing programmes of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Accion contra el Hambre, Médecins sans Frontières, France, and the United Methodists Committee on Relief.

31. Mine clearance activities, under the leadership of the HALO Trust, have also continued. In addition, the HALO Trust has received authorization to establish the Abkhazia Mine Action Centre. It is anticipated that the Centre will collect information about mines and unexploded ordnance, and that it will coordinate mine-clearance, minefield marking and mine awareness training

activities in Abkhazia. During the reporting period, ICRC launched a new mine awareness programme that will supplement the activities of the HALO Trust. The first such presentation was made in January to children in Sukhumi.

32. During the reporting period, the field staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have continued their protection monitoring activities in the parts of the Gali district where security conditions permit access. These activities included observing and assessing the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons across the line of separation of forces. Since 1 March, the starting date of the Abkhaz unilateral initiative for the return of refugees to the Gali district, several displaced persons have returned, primarily to Gali town and some areas in the upper part of the district. The beginning of the agricultural season is expected to bring more returnees to the lower Gali, in particular to those areas where the Abkhaz militia has limited presence.

33. In other parts of western Georgia, UNHCR, in cooperation with its implementing partners and the local authorities, has completed emergency shelter repairs and school rehabilitation projects. This timely assistance, together with parallel projects in the health, water and sanitation sectors, has helped to improve basic living conditions in communal centres for the majority of internally displaced persons, most of whom fled the Gali district during the events of May 1998.

34. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continues to monitor the overall humanitarian situation in Abkhazia and in the rest of western Georgia. The Office continues to insist that humanitarian aid workers must enjoy complete freedom of movement. This, however, has yet to be achieved in the Gali district, particularly outside Gali town, where security conditions place aid workers at risk.

35. The new Head of the Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, assumed her duties on 15 February 1999. The Office monitors the human rights situation by handling individual complaints and conducting regular weekly patrolling with the assistance of UNOMIG in the Gali region. The Office has started developing small projects in the field of human rights training and education for schools. The destabilization of the security conditions, especially in the Gali region, as well as the rising level of poverty among the population as a whole, are responsible for numerous cases of violations of basic human rights such as the right to life, the right to liberty and security of the individual and the right to property.

VIII. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

36. During the reporting period, the economic and social situation in Abkhazia continued to deteriorate. Mr. Ardzinba, during his annual address to the de facto parliament on 4 March, characterized the economic situation as extremely grave. Production continues to be extremely limited, and even the infrastructure undamaged by the war has seriously decayed. Most young people with talent and resources have left Abkhazia to find employment or educational opportunities elsewhere; among those staying, drug use and criminality are on

the rise. The latter have few prospects for finding employment and earning a salary.

37. The economic situation in Georgia continues to be negatively affected by turbulence in the international financial markets, particularly in the Russian Federation. The near-cessation of Georgia's exports to the Russian Federation, which represented almost 30 per cent of the country's total exports, had a negative impact on the performance of the national economy. Nevertheless, a 3 to 4 per cent growth of GDP was recorded during the past year.

IX. OBSERVATIONS

38. The failure to reach agreement in January on the terms for the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali district and measures for the economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia, Georgia, meant that a valuable opportunity was missed to take a major step forward in the peace process. As I noted in my last report (S/1990/60, para. 44), the return of refugees and displaced persons is a humanitarian priority, and their right to return home, in conditions of full security, is imprescriptible. The time for bargaining over formulations has long since passed. What is required is that each side demonstrate the necessary political will to conclude an agreement which would make it possible for the international community to participate in this effort. Pending such an agreement, direct bilateral contacts between the parties should continue, not only at the level of the Coordinating Council, but also in the spheres of economic projects and confidence-building measures.

39. Over the past three months, it has taken all the diligence of the military and political staff of UNOMIG to preserve, and indeed slightly improve upon, the lessening of tension in the Mission's area of responsibility which had resulted from the 21 December 1998 meeting in Gali (see S/1999/60, paras. 25 and 27). Again, no incident has been targeted at UNOMIG's staff. Because of the continuing mine threat and criminal and terrorist activities, however, the situation is not yet such that the operational restrictions imposed on the Mission in February 1998 can be lifted, or that some or all of the team bases can be reopened.

40. While UNOMIG is able, within the present operational constraints, to monitor satisfactorily the two sides' compliance with the Moscow Agreement of 1994, it can only in a very limited way by its presence in the area, contribute to conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons (resolution 937 (1994), para. 6 (i)). A further improvement of the security situation, based on tangible measures by the two sides, will be required before UNOMIG is able to return to its pre-February 1998 operational pattern and in this way increase its presence in all parts of its area of responsibility. Only then will UNOMIG be able to fully implement the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council.

41. In addition to measures to stabilize the security environment, two specific actions by the parties would significantly help to improve the situation on the ground, namely, the full separation of forces from the ceasefire line and the establishment of a joint investigation mechanism. The withdrawal of forces from

some areas along the ceasefire line, including the sensitive Khurcha pocket, has reduced tensions noticeably. The parties need to follow up on this development with more determination so that all remaining positions are withdrawn and the separation of forces is completed, as agreed in the Gagra Protocol of May 1998. UNOMIG stands ready to lend its assistance to this end.

42. Further, final agreement on a mechanism for the joint investigation of violations of the Moscow Agreement and other incidents of violence will not only foster greater mutual confidence among the parties and greater respect for their mutual undertakings, but also discourage acts of violence and thus improve the general security environment.

43. Tensions associated with upcoming elections in Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia, together with continuing economic difficulties, are creating an environment in which provocations along the line of separation of forces might easily lead to a more general destabilization. For this reason, it is essential that both sides exercise great restraint in their responses to any incidents arising on the ground. They should also take concrete steps to improve their cooperation in the security field.

44. I wish to thank once again my Special Representative, the Chief Military Observer and all the women and men of UNOMIG for their dedication and perseverance in carrying out, in difficult and at times dangerous conditions, the mandate given to them by the Security Council.

Annex

Composition of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia as at 1 April 1999

Country	Military observers
Albania	1
Austria	4
Bangladesh	8
Czech Republic	4
Denmark	5
Egypt	3
France	5
Germany	10
Greece	4
Hungary	5
Indonesia	4
Jordan	6
Pakistan	7
Poland	4
Republic of Korea	3
Russian Federation	3
Sweden	5
Switzerland	4
Turkey	5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	7
United States of America	2
Uruguay	3
Total	102

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VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 21 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a resolution adopted on 3 April 1999 by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as the text of the Declaration (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 64, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-11593 (E) 220499 220499

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ANNEX I

Resolution adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly resolves:

1. To approve the Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex II);

2. To forward the text of this Declaration to the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the North Atlantic Assembly;

3. To take note of the fact that the Declaration was voted on and unanimously supported by parliamentary delegations from the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and Ukraine.

(Signed) E. S. STROEV
Chairman of the Council
of the Assembly

Saint Petersburg
3 April 1999

ANNEX II

Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),

Recognizing its shared responsibility for national security and global peace,

Perceiving military operations by the North Atlantic alliance in the territory of sovereign Yugoslavia, without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council, as a challenge to the current system of international relations, and a real threat to peace and stability in Europe and the world in general,

Expressing its deep concern at the risk of another cold war on the planet and of armed inter-State conflicts,

Calls on the parliaments and Governments of the States members of the North Atlantic Alliance to take immediate action to halt military operations in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a Member of the United Nations,

Considers that missiles and bombs cannot be used as arguments in addressing the complex problems of the modern world and that the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations must be observed, and, accordingly, supports the proposal of the Russian Federation to convene an emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly, and to include the item on the agenda of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE,

Calls on the leadership of Yugoslavia to do its utmost to settle the Kosovo conflict exclusively by peaceful means and on the basis of political dialogue.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of CIS, acting as a consistent proponent of political settlement in situations of crisis, invites parliamentarians throughout the world to take the most resolute action to halt NATO military action and resume the process of negotiations within the framework of the Contact Group, for it is convinced that concerted efforts by the international community to establish peace in Yugoslavia will prevent further tragic developments that could have unpredictable consequences for humanity.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly supports the initiative of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus to propose that parliaments throughout the world designate the year 2000 as the Year of Concord and Consolidation of Good-neighbourliness, with a view to promoting peace, trade, economic, cultural and other international relations.

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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 21 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information from the State Committee of the Russian Federation on environmental protection "On possible environmental consequences of the military aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Yugoslavia" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 94, and of the Security Council.

In view of the urgency of this issue, I would request you to take steps to have this document circulated as expeditiously as possible.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

Annex

State Committee of the Russian Federation on environmental protection: "Information on possible environmental consequences of the military aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Yugoslavia"

At present NATO is intensively bombing targets in Yugoslavia. While at the beginning of the aggression, military targets were involved, the targets of the bomb and missile strikes are now chemical plants, oil depots and oil refineries.

According to expert assessments, this is causing large-scale contamination of the environment by highly toxic substances, oil and oil products, and also the products of their combustion, which may lead to long-term adverse effects because of the degradation of the environment not only in the territory of Yugoslavia itself, but also in countries of the entire European region. As a result of the bombing of the oil refinery in Pančevo and of the "Petrokhemia" and "Azotara" chemical factories alone, large quantities of oil, oil products, products of their combustion, and also dangerous, harmful, explosive and highly inflammable substances, with long-term harmful effects - carcinogenic, mutagenic and teratogenic - have been released into the environment. The danger of perceptible global climate changes as a result of the significant discharges of soot and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere cannot be excluded.

It should be noted that because of the fires associated with the bombing of chemical facilities and oil refineries, there is a great danger of contamination of the environment by such products of combustion as dioxins, dioxin compounds and benzopyrene, which may be even more toxic than the products of the chemical factories themselves.

Thus, the toxicity of dioxin greatly exceeds the toxicity of military poisons (sarin, soman, tabun), cyanides, strychnine and curare. However, a basic capability of these compounds is their ability to accumulate in the environment and in living organisms. Dioxins, even in small concentrations, cause a suppression of the immune system. In higher concentrations, they cause mutagenic, embryotoxic and teratogenic effects, and have an adverse effect on the gene pool of the population, and of the plant and animal kingdoms. Contamination by dioxins was the reason for the massive damage in Viet Nam as a result of the use of dioxin-containing herbicides by the army of the United States of America and in Seveso (Italy) as a result of an accident at a chemical combine; contamination was also recorded in the state of Missouri (United States of America) and Japan (use of food products contaminated by dioxins).

Benzopyrene, which forms when oil products burn at low temperatures (for example, in fires at oil refineries and oil depots) is a very powerful carcinogen.

The deliberate bombing of environmentally hazardous targets and the growing scale of damage to the environment demonstrate that there is a transition from localized military action to the phase of large-scale environmental warfare. A paradox of the situation is that some of Yugoslavia's closest neighbours are

It should be noted that the provisions of a number of other international conventions and international declarations which restrict damage to the environment as a result of military action are also being violated:

World Charter for Nature, 1982, article 5: "Nature shall be secured against degradation caused by warfare or other hostile activities" and article 20: "Military activities damaging to nature shall be avoided";

Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment, 1972;

Convention for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (World Heritage Convention 1972), article 6, paragraph 3: "Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to take any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage ... situated on the territory of other States Parties to this Convention";

Protocol I additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, article 35, paragraph 3: "It is prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment".

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A/54/82
S/1999/463
22 April 1999

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Item 161 of the preliminary list*
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 19 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I refer to the letters addressed to you from the Permanent Representatives of Syria (A/53/876-S/1999/326) and Lebanon (A/53/878-S/1999/333), both dated 24 March 1999. Given the overt similarities in style and content, which are not surprising, it might prove more than convenient to address both letters with a single response.

First, I wish to recall the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism of 1994 (General Assembly resolution 49/60, annex), whereby the international community reaffirmed that provoking terror is "in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations". I would also recall the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), annex), which provides that sovereignty carries a responsibility not to allow terrorist acts to be organized or prepared in one's territory. In sum, supporting terror - under any pretext - is both morally repugnant and a violation of international norms.

The Syrian and Lebanese letters, like the policies of Syria and Lebanon on the ground, stand in direct contradiction to all of the aforementioned principles. By disguising terrorists in the false cloak of national resistance, these statements engage in an insidious form of complicity to terrorism.

In particular, the Lebanese Representative claims that Hizballah's "resistance" targets only the Israeli forces that operate in Lebanon. This is

* A/54/50.

plainly false. Hizballah has targeted and murdered hundreds of innocent civilians throughout the world. Moreover, Hizballah's record of seizing hostages from many countries is a well established fact, known throughout the international community. As recently as December 1998, Hizballah launched a massive rocket attack against civilian towns and villages in northern Israel, destroying hundreds of buildings, injuring civilians, and forcing thousands into underground bomb shelters to escape the deadly barrage. The attempt by Lebanon and Syria to redefine this terrorism as "resistance" is an insult to the hundreds of victims of Hizballah's gruesome tactics over the years.

It should, moreover, be noted that Hizballah's own statements belie the picture that the Lebanese and Syrian Representatives are attempting to portray to United Nations Member States. Hizballah's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, announced recently that "Palestine is occupied territory and the Israeli presence there is an occupation entity and illegal. There is no end to the struggle with such a regime" (Joumhouri Islami, Iran, 6 March 1999). In other words, the "resistance" of Hizballah is not a "struggle for national liberation", as the Lebanese Representative would have Member States believe, but a campaign against the very existence of the State of Israel.

The blatant support of Syria and Lebanon for the terrorism of Hizballah is further confirmed by the language of these two letters, such as the suggestion in the Syrian letter that Hizballah's terrorism is a "legitimate struggle" and the Lebanese statement identifying Lebanon directly with Hizballah, renaming the group "the Lebanese National Resistance". Indeed, far from restraining Hizballah as it is obliged to do under international law, Lebanon has openly adopted the terrorist group as its own.

Israel has repeatedly expressed its willingness to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) in its entirety. In that resolution, the Council calls for not only the withdrawal of Israeli forces but also the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in that area. The declared willingness of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments to host an elaborate terrorist infrastructure, permit its regular reinforcement and endorse its operations directed against a neighbouring country is totally incompatible with the last two provisions of the resolution.

Lebanon refuses to negotiate with Israel on implementing resolution 425 despite Israel's continuing invitations to do so. Lebanon's Prime Minister reiterated this point on 14 March in a radio interview: "We are not at all ready to discuss with Israel any security arrangements or granting any guarantees" (Sawt al-Arab Radio, 14 March 1999). Therefore, Israel is left with no choice but to exercise its right to self-defence in accordance with international law.

It is particularly sad that the possibility of peace and security along the Israel-Lebanon border is being sabotaged by a third country, namely Syria, which in effect is holding the implementation of Council resolution 425 hostage to its own bid for territorial gains with Israel. The confluence of these two letters underscores the nature of this forced linkage.

Nevertheless, Israel once again calls on the Government of Lebanon to return to the negotiating table on implementing Council resolution 425. Israel also calls on the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Syria to resume negotiations with Israel in order to resolve all outstanding issues in the appropriate bilateral frameworks.

I should be grateful if you will have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 161 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ambassador Dore GOLD
Permanent Representative

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Item 43 of the preliminary list*
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 19 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As the date of 4 May 1999 approaches, it is necessary to clarify the precise legal obligations of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with respect to the interim arrangements created by the Oslo Accords in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This clarification has been made particularly urgent since the international community has been recently exposed to repeated Palestinian arguments claiming that the transitional period will end on 4 May and hence a legal and political vacuum will ensue that should be filled by a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state.

This argument is false. There will be no legal vacuum after 4 May 1999. The original hope of the parties was indeed to reach agreement on permanent status arrangements by 4 May 1999, while transitional interim arrangements were being implemented. But this was a suggested target date alone.

If the two sides do not succeed in concluding the permanent status negotiations by 4 May 1999, the interim arrangements will continue until these negotiations have been concluded. It should be emphasized that the interim Agreement explicitly prohibits the parties from changing "the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations" (article XXXI; 7, emphasis added). This prohibition on changing the status of the territories is notably not linked to a specific date.

In short, the Oslo arrangements do not expire. Moreover, the status of the disputed territories is not to be altered until permanent status negotiations are completed. It is for this reason that the Interim Agreement contains a date for its entry into force but no date for its conclusion. It is also for this

* A/54/50.

reason that 4 May 1999 is described, in the Israel-PLO agreements, as an "aim" or "mutual goal" and not as a fixed deadline.

This approach, in fact, is reflected in the actual practice of the parties to date. Where, in the course of implementing the Oslo Accords, the two sides have been unable to reach agreements by the specified target dates, the arrangements in force have continued to apply until the negotiation on the new arrangements have been concluded. This was the case with respect to the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in 1994 and the Hebron Protocol in 1997.

Finally, it should be stressed that the Palestinians have refused Israel's repeated invitation to negotiate a permanent status agreement. Therefore, they cannot now be permitted to rely on the absence of such an agreement, which they themselves prevented, to justify a unilateral declaration of statehood. The false argument of a vacuum is clearly being advanced in order to totally change the agreed terms of the peace process: to replace a negotiated resolution of Israeli-Palestinian differences with a unilateralist alternative. It should be recalled that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat committed himself, in a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 9 September 1993, to the principle that "all outstanding issues related to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations".

Similarly, Palestinian spokesmen are also referring to General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, as filling the purported vacuum that they allege will occur on 4 May 1999. Israel has repeatedly stated that this resolution was overtaken by events and therefore its recommendations have been characterized as null and void by repeated Israeli Governments. The only relevant United Nation resolutions governing the peace process are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which supersede Assembly resolution 181 (II) and call for the termination of the state of belligerence between the parties as well as the right of every State in the area to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

For this reason, a Palestinian unilateral declaration of statehood is more than simply an unlawful act. It is a rejection of the two fundamental principles of the peace process: the need to accommodate the legitimate rights of both sides and the recognition that this accommodation can only be achieved through negotiation. It would thus undermine the only framework that has proved capable of bringing about genuine changes in the situation of the Palestinian people - to the extent that today 97 per cent of the Palestinians of the West Bank and all the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip live under Palestinian not Israeli rule.

I should be grateful if you would have this document circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 43 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ambassador Dore GOLD
Permanent Representative

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S/1999/465
22 April 1999
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ORIGINAL: ARABIC

LETTER DATED 22 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF YEMEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 21 April 1999 from Mr. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, setting forth a peace initiative with regard to the crisis in Yugoslavia proposed by His Excellency Lt. General Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdalla Saleh AL-ASHTAL
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 21 April 1999 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit to you a proposal put forward by His Excellency Lt. General Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen, with a view to resolving the crisis in Yugoslavia.

The purpose of this initiative is to support peaceful endeavours to end the Yugoslav crisis and the suffering of innocent civilians, and to halt the destruction and warfare.

(Signed) Abdul-Qader BA-JAMMAL
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Enclosure

1. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia shall halt all military operations in Kosovo, including the forcible expulsion of the inhabitants of that region. At the same time, the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization shall cease their aerial attacks.

2. The necessary arrangements shall be made for the withdrawal, under the supervision of the United Nations, of Yugoslav troops from the Kosovo region and their replacement by an international peacekeeping force to be created pursuant to a Security Council resolution.

3. The international force shall be responsible for keeping the peace in the region and supervising the return of displaced persons to their homes.

4. The United Nations shall preside over a peace conference, to be attended by all interested parties, with a view to finding a peaceful and durable solution to the Yugoslav crisis.

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LETTER DATED 22 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group at the United Nations, I have the honour to inform you that the members of the Group have been following with great interest the recent developments in the Lockerbie case and that they would like to submit to you the following:

The Islamic Group at the United Nations,

Applauding the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for the flexibility and reasonableness with which it has tackled the issue since the dispute first began,

Expressing the highest appreciation for the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan, the leaders of South Africa and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and others to arrive at an agreement acceptable to all parties and to secure a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to the dispute,

Recalling the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Islamic Summit Conference at its eighth session, held in Tehran from 9 to 11 December 1997, by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at its twenty-fifth session, held in Doha from 15 to 17 March 1998, and by the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in New York on 1 October 1998,

Calling attention to the letter dated 19 March 1999 from His Excellency Omar Mustafa Muntasser, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (S/1999/311, annex),

Taking note of the letter dated 5 April 1999 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/378),

Observing that the Security Council responded quickly and with unanimity to the recent step taken by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by issuing a press statement on 5 April 1999 and a presidential statement on 8 April 1999 under whose terms all of the sanctions imposed on the country were suspended as of 5 April 1999,

1. Expresses the view that, in addition to the press statement of 5 April 1999 and the presidential statement of 8 April 1999, the suspension of sanctions should also have been embodied in a resolution adopted by the Security Council so as to place the question in its correct legal framework;

2. Requests the Council speedily to adopt a resolution definitively lifting the sanctions imposed on Libya, which has cooperated fully, has discharged all of its obligations under Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992), 883 (1993) and 1192 (1998) and has responded to the requests to which reference is made in resolution 731 (1992);

3. Expresses the view, now that the legal process has gone before the Scottish court as agreed by all the parties concerned, that the politicization, in any form and by any party whatever, of this legal dispute would be unacceptable and that, inasmuch as the matter is sub judice, all the parties must comply with whatever verdict is reached by the Scottish court convened in the Netherlands.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nassir Abdelaziz AL-NASSER
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Qatar
Chairman of the Islamic Group

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LETTER DATED 22 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you as follows:

1. On the night of 5/6 April 1999 a Kuwaiti patrol in the Khawr Abd Allah area near Mina' al-Bakr intercepted Iraqi craft No. 29/Basrah, with Nuri Ibrahim Ahmad at the wheel, while it was engaged in fishing. The patrol crew searched the craft, confiscated the compass and took away the fishing permits belonging to the nine fishermen on board. A shot was fired at the craft, and the window of the wheelhouse was broken.

2. On 6 April 1999 a Kuwaiti patrol in the Khawr Abd Allah area inside Iraqi territorial waters intercepted Iraqi craft No. 14/Basrah, belonging to Abd al-Amir Khudayr Sultan, and took away the fishing permits of the 13 fishermen present as well as the customs carnet.

3. On 6 April 1999 a Kuwaiti patrol in the area of the buoys intercepted the Iraqi craft Nisrin (No. 135/Basrah), with Hafiz Abbas Jum'ah at the wheel, while it was engaged in fishing. The patrol crew searched the craft and took the fishing permits belonging to the eight fishermen.

4. At 1630 hours on 6 April 1999 Iraqi craft No. 73, belonging to Abd al-Amir Abd Ali Fadl, was searched by a Kuwaiti patrol boat as it was fishing inside Iraqi territorial waters. The patrol-boat crew searched the Iraqi craft and confiscated and threw into the sea the fishing permits belonging to the fishermen.

I request you to intervene with the Government of Kuwait with a view to halting violations and provocative and unwarranted actions that have recently become more frequent, given that they are in breach of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law and that they pose a threat to the security and sovereignty of a member State of the United Nations.

I also affirm Iraq's legally established right, in accordance with the principle of State responsibility, to seek compensation for the damage done to its citizens and their property by these acts of aggression.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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LETTER DATED 22 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Contact Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement on the situation in Kosova, adopted at the meeting of the Contact Group today.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hadi NEJAD HOSSEINIAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Chairman of the OIC Contact Group
on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova

Annex

Statement issued on 22 April 1999 by the Contact Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova

Recalling the Declaration of the Ministerial Meeting of the OIC Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova adopted on 7 April 1999 in Geneva (S/1999/394, annex), the OIC Contact Group expresses support for the proposals of the Secretary-General of 9 April 1999, as contained in S/1999/402, concerning the deeply distressing tragedy in Kosova and in which the Secretary-General called upon the Yugoslav authorities to undertake five commitments to allow for a lasting political solution to be found for the crisis in Kosova through diplomacy.

The OIC Contact Group welcomes the fact that, in the informal consultations of the Security Council on 19 April 1999, the Secretary-General reiterated the commitments he had sought from the Yugoslav authorities and tried "to promote consensus in the Security Council" with a view to enabling the United Nations to fulfil its obligation under the Charter and finding "a diplomatic solution aimed at ensuring lasting peace and stability in the region".

In this context, the OIC Contact Group lends full support to the Secretary-General for his initiatives and diplomatic efforts in search of a just and durable political solution which would ensure, inter alia, an end to the Yugoslav policy of ethnic cleansing and the swift, safe and unimpeded return of all Kosovar refugees and internally displaced persons under international protection throughout Kosova.

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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 22 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Contact Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement on the situation in Kosova, adopted at the meeting of the Contact Group today.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hadi NEJAD HOSSEINIAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Chairman of the OIC Contact Group
on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova

* Reissued for technical reasons.

Annex

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The OIC Contact Group welcomes the fact that, in the informal consultations of the Security Council on 19 April 1999, the Secretary-General reiterated the commitments he had sought from the Yugoslav authorities and tried "to promote consensus in the Security Council" with a view to enabling the United Nations to fulfil its obligation under the Charter and finding "a diplomatic solution aimed at ensuring lasting peace and stability in the region".

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LETTER DATED 22 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Contact Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova, I have the honour to express the Group's deep concern about the increasing number of Sandjak Muslims who are being forced to flee, mostly to Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that this matter has also been brought to the attention of the Security Council by Elizabeth Rehn, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of United Nations Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 20 April 1999.

Increasingly, the Muslims of the Sandjak region are now being victimized by an accelerated campaign of ethnic cleansing orchestrated by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Serbia. In the last few days, several victims have been murdered. Others have been tortured or beaten. Legally elected officials from the Sandjak region, representatives to the Serbian Parliament and local functionaries have been beaten and prevented from exercising their responsibilities. Citizens from Sandjak are being forced to flee their homes. Tens of thousands are already in Bosnia and Herzegovina, overwhelming that country's already over-extended resources.

The campaign directed at the Sandjak Muslim population is very much similar to that suffered by the Albanian Kosovars. Once again, the religion of the targeted victims is the criterion for murder, torture and forced displacement. In the areas of the Sandjak within the Republic of Montenegro, Montenegrin law enforcement is prevented from asserting legalities and restoring civilian order by the forces of the Yugoslav Army.

We urge the Security Council to urgently address the situation in view of the consequences for both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sandjak population. We believe the crimes perpetrated there, by both regular Yugoslav Army and paramilitary forces, deserve the review of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hadi NEJAD HOSSEINIAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the OIC Contact Group on
Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova